DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 455 497 CS 014 437

AUTHOR Beard, Roger
TITLE Diversity and Synergy? The International Context of the English Literacy Strategy.
PUB DATE 2001-07-00
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the European Reading Conference (12th, Dublin, Ireland, July 1-4, 2001).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Comparative Education; *Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Effective Schools Research; Elementary Secondary Education; *Literacy; Literature Reviews; Reading Processes; Reading Research; *Scholarship; Writing Research
IDENTIFIERS *Synergy; United Kingdom

ABSTRACT

This paper builds upon the "Review of Research and Other Related Evidence" that was commissioned for the government of the United Kingdom's National Literacy Strategy and also upon a subsequent review of international research evidence on children's writing. The paper suggests how "synergy" (combined effect) may be created by linking previously diverse research areas to established thinking in literacy education, to inform policy and practice. It states that synergy reflects the gains from considering what Declan Kibberd referred to at the beginning of the conference as "not either...or..." but "both...and...." Four research areas are discussed in the paper: school effectiveness research; reading process research; overseas reading pedagogy research; and writing research. The paper suggests that the National Literacy Strategy may be seen as an example of international research and scholarship influencing policy and practice in a distinctly productive way (see also Beard and Willcocks, 2001). Contains 45 references. (NKA)

ED 455 497

Diversity and Synergy?

The International Context of the English Literacy Strategy

Paper presented at the 12th European Conference on Reading
Dublin, July 2001

Roger Beard
Reader in Literacy Education
School of Education, University of Leeds
LEEDS L52 9JT England
R.F.Beard@education.leeds.ac.uk

CS 014 437

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R. Beard
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Diversity and Synergy?

The International Context of the English Literacy Strategy

Introduction

This paper builds upon the Review of Research and Other Related Evidence that was commissioned for the UK government's National Literacy Strategy (Beard, 1999a; see also Beard, 2000b and c) and also upon a subsequent review of international research evidence on children's writing (Beard, 2000a). The paper will suggest how 'synergy' (combined effect) may be created by linking previously diverse research areas to established thinking in literacy education, in order to inform policy and practice. Synergy reflects the gains from considering what Declan Kiberd referred to at the beginning of the conference as 'not "either…or…"', but "both…and…"'. Four research areas will be discussed: school effectiveness research; reading process research; overseas reading pedagogy research and writing research.

The National Literacy Strategy

The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) was implemented in English primary schools (5-11 year olds) in 1998. Its main aim is to raise literacy standards by encouraging schools to use a combination of teaching approaches derived from an international review of effective practice undertaken by a Literacy Task Force (LTF, 1997 a and b). This combination is brought together in a daily 'literacy hour', comprising whole class and group teaching and independent work. Specific teaching methods include: shared reading and writing; guided reading and writing; and plenary sessions for whole class review, reflection and consolidation. The teaching is based on a Framework for Teaching, comprising termly objectives (based on the English National Curriculum), structured at text, sentence and word levels. The NLS also encourages reading to the class, children's individual reading and extended writing (DfEE, 1998; see also Beard, 1999b). The NLS is underpinned by a national target that; by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should reach the standard 'expected for their age' in English (Level 4) in the National Curriculum tests. The proportion reaching this standard in 1996 was 57%. The NLS has been held up by international authorities on educational change as the most ambitious large-scale strategy of educational reform witnessed since the 1960s (Fullan, 2000).

School effectiveness research

The NLS reflects several key implications of school effectiveness research School effectiveness is generally gauged by the further progress which pupils make than might be expected from consideration of the school's intake. The measures are normally in basic subjects especially reading and numeracy, and examinations.

School effectiveness research was drawn upon in both reports from the Literacy Task Force (LTF, 1997a and b). The Task Force contained two authorities in the field, Michael Barber and David Reynolds. Both have highlighted the tensions between British teaching practices and research findings on effectiveness including issues by unnecessarily complex teaching arrangements (e.g. Barber, 1997; Reynolds, 1992). This concern has also continued to be expressed in reports of inspection evidence (e.g. OFSTED, 1997).

English primary schools have for many years been influenced by notions of 'good practice' that have been summed up by what Robin Alexander has described as 'multiple curriculum focus in teaching sessions, with different groups working in different curriculum areas and the kinds of teacher-pupil interaction associated with a commitment to discovery learning (Alexander, 1992 p.143). Alexander notes that a feature of such approaches is often that 'the good tends to be asserted but seldom demonstrated' (Alexander, 1992, p. 180).

Two particular meta-analyses (research syntheses) on school effectiveness were singled out by the Literacy Task Force (LTF, 1997b); those by Jaap Sheerens (1992 and Bert Creemers (1994). The following extract from Sheerens' analyses identifies a number of factors that, according to research and inspection evidence, were relatively uncommon in English primary schools before the advent of the NLS.

Sheerens (1992) identifies two characteristics of school effectiveness that have 'multiple empirical research confirmation':

structured teaching

- making clear what has to be learnt
- dividing material into manageable units
- teaching in a well-considered sequence
- using material in which pupils make use of hunches and prompts
- regular testing for progress
- giving immediate feedback

effective learning time

This factor is partly related to the first, in that whole class teaching can often be superior to individualized teaching because in the latter the teacher has to divide attention in such a way that the net result per pupil is lower. Other aspects of effective teaching time are 'curricular emphasis', related to the time spent on certain subjects, and the need to inspire, challenge and praise so as to stimulate the motivation to learn and thus indirectly to increase net learning time.

Thus the combined effect of bringing together school effectiveness research and literacy and education underlined the likely value of more sustained attention to literacy, through a limited focus in lessons, greater emphasis on whole class and group teaching and the use of various interactive shared teaching techniques.

Reading process research

If generic research on school effectiveness partly predicted the success of the NLS, so did findings from reading research, especially that concerned with the reading process. There is evidence of another substantial tension in recent years: between the model of reading assumed by influential British teacher education publications and the conclusions from experimental research. These conclusions have been recently marked by an unusual consensus in what has often been a contentious area of investigation. Recent psychological research indicates that what characterises reading fluency is context-independent word recognition and context-dependent comprehension. This is well discussed by Charles Perfetti (1995). UK literacy education has, for many years, been disproportionately influenced by a model that is in some ways diametrically opposite (e.g. Brooks et al., 1992; Beard and Oakhill, 1994).

For some years fluent reading was held to be a 'psycholinguistic guessing game' by some influential writers. This view assumed that fluent reading was characterised by increasing use of contextual cues and minimal use of visual cues (Goodman, 1967; Smith 1971). In the last twenty years a great deal of evidence has been put forward in support of the opposite view (see also Beard 1995; Stanovich, 2000).

Recent research-based models of fluent reading suggest that reading involves the use of sources of contextual, comprehension, visual and phonological information which are simultaneously interactive, issuing and accommodating to and from each other

(Rumelhart and McClelland, 1986; Seidenberg and McClelland, 1989; Adams, 1990; Reid, 1993; Stanovich and Stanovich, 1995; Perfetti, 1995). These findings are reflected in the NLS 'searchlights' model of reading, which draws attention to four main cue systems: contextual understanding, grammatical knowledge, word recognition and phonic knowledge. The model also allows for the fact that beginning readers may draw disproportionately on one or more of these cues systems until reading fluency is established.

Overseas reading pedagogy research

Inspection evidence and curriculum development research have also highlighted several other aspects where British primary education may have been out of step with thinking in other countries. Early reading in English primary schools has been largely taught by individualised methods in which the structure of commercial materials was often very influential. There was little use of regular direct class or group teaching of reading, even when the design of commercial materials suggested it (OFSTED, 1996c). As an earlier HMI report had pointed out, for most 5-7 year old pupils, reading to the teacher was often the most frequent experience of one-to-one teaching… often less than five minutes per pupil. Schools generally provided too few opportunities for the pupils to see and hear the text of a story simultaneously (HMI, 1992, p. 16).

This state of affairs contrasted with the shared reading approaches which have been developed in New Zealand. In these, teacher and pupils simultaneously read aloud a large format text. The approach has been especially promoted in the writing of Don Holdaway (1979, 1982). He was particularly interested in developing methods which resembled the visual intimacy with print which characterises the pre-school book experience of parents reading with their children. Research suggests that, before the National Literacy Strategy, large format texts were not widely used for teaching reading in English primary schools (e.g. Cato, et al., 1992; Ireson et al, 1995; Wragg et al., 1998; see also Beard, 2000c).

There was a similar story in relation to the teaching of skills for dealing with information texts. According to inspection evidence, these were taught rather patchily and sometimes left to chance (OFSTED, 1996a). Links between reading and writing were often not directly made (OFSTED, 1996b). This indicated that much might be gained from the approaches developed from Australian genre theory. The distinctive features of various genres are used firstly to raise awareness about their structures, then to model

them in shared reading and writing and eventually to tackle them in collaborative or independent writing (Martin, 1989; Callaghan and Rothery, 1988; Cope and Kalantzis, 1993; see also Lewis and Wray, 1995).

Thus the NLS has used reading pedagogy research to create a framework whose synergy is created by combining text level teaching (including various literary and informational genres) with attention to sentence level features and the letters and sounds that form the foundations of the alphabetic writing system.

Writing research

Finally, what research perspectives might contribute to a global synergy in the effective teaching of writing? There are growing concerns about writing performance in English schools, In annual national test results the writing scores have consistently lagged behind the others. In 2000 the annual percentage of pupils achieving national expectations was only 55% (compared with 83% in reading), with boys performing much less well than girls.

Recent years have seen greater attention being paid to purpose and audience in writing. There has also been increased interest in the process of writing. However, some significant international research findings remain under-exploited. Meta-analyses of research have identified four broad approaches to the teaching of writing (Hillocks, 1986; 1995). The most widely used, 'presentational', approach (setting tasks and marking outcomes') appears to be the least effective. It involves telling pupils what is strong or weak in writing performance, but it does not provide opportunities for them to learn procedures for putting this knowledge to work. In contrast, 'guided writing' teaching approaches have been gauged to be over four times more effective than the presentational approach and two or three times more effective than 'process' or individualised approaches. This may be because guided writing presents new forms, models and criteria and facilitates their use in different writing tasks.

The teaching of guided writing approaches can also be enhanced by the use of shared writing, where the teacher and pupils construct a text together. The value of shared writing was underlined by experimental studies which indicate that pupils (and teachers) need to be made aware of the full extent of the composing process (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1993). Again, according to inspection evidence, shared and guided teaching approaches have not been widely used in the teaching of writing in the UK until recently (OFSTED, 2000).

Conclusion

In relation to national standards in England, the annual percentages of eleven year olds achieving at least the standard expected for their age in English (Level 4) since the implementation of the NLS are shown below. The annual percentages of eleven year olds achieving Level 4 or above in English has risen as follows:

1996	**57%**	1997	**63%**	1998	**65%**	1999	**71%**	2000	**75%**

Two qualifying comments need to be made about the results reported above.

1. The National Tests are externally set and externally marked. They also include separate teacher assessments by the pupils' own teachers: these have recorded slightly lower scores in the 1999 and 2000 (68% and 70% respectively, although still maintaining a rising trend of pupil performance since 1996).

2. The English National Tests scores are composites, made up of performance data in speaking and listening, reading and writing.

This paper has suggested that the National Literacy Strategy may be seen as an example of international research and scholarship influencing policy and practice in a distinctly productive way (see also Beard and Willcocks, 2001). Papers such as this will now in turn place the broader lessons from the INLS at the disposal of researchers and scholars elsewhere in the world. The NLS itself may in time offer 'other ways of seeing'.

References

Adams, M.J. (1990). Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press.

Alexander, R.J. (1992). Policy and Practice in Primary Education. London: Routledge.

Barber, M. (1997). The Learning Game: Arguments for An Education Revolution. London: Indigo.

Beard, R. (1995). Learning to Read: Psychology and Education. In E. Funnell & M. Stuart (Eds), Learning to Read: Psychology in the Classroom. Oxford: Blackwell.

Beard, R. (1999a). National Literacy Strategy: Review of research and other related evidence. London: Department for Education and Employment.

Beard, R. (1999b). English: Range, Key Skills and Language Study. In J. Riley & R. Prentice (Eds.), The Curriculum for 7-11 year olds. (pp.47-66). London: Paul Chapman.

Beard, R. (2000a). Developing Writing 3-13. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Beard, R. (2000b). Long overdue? Another look at the National Literacy Strategy. Journal of Research in Reading, 23(3), 245-255.

Beard, R. (2000c). Research and the National Literacy Strategy. Oxford Review of Education, 26 (3&4), 421-436.

Beard, R. & Oakhill, J. (1994). Reading by Apprenticeship? A Critique of the apprenticeship approach to the teaching of reading. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Beard, R. & Willcocks, J. (2001). Using International Research to Develop Literacy Teaching. Paper presented at the International Reading Association, New Orleans.
http://education.leeds.ac.uk/~edu-rfb/index.htm

Bereiter, C. & Scardamalia, M. (1993). Composing and Writing. In Beard, R. (Ed). Teaching Literacy: Balancing Perspectives. Sevenoaks: Hodder and Stoughton.

Brooks, G., Gorman, T., Kendall, L. & Tate, A. (1992). What teachers in training are taught about reading. Slough: National Foundation for Educational Research.

Callaghan, M. & Rothery, J. (1988). Teaching Factual Writing: A Genre-Based Approach. Sydney: Metropolitan East Disadvantaged Schools Programme.

Cato, V., Fernandes, C., Gorman, T., Kispal, A. with White, J. (1992). The Teaching of Initial Literacy: How do teachers do it? Slough: NFER.

Cope, B. & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (1993). The Powers of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing. London: Falmer Press.

Creemers, B.P.M. (1994). The Effective Classroom. London: Cassell.

DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) (1998). The National Literacy Strategy: Framework for Teaching. London: author.

Fullan, M. (2000). The Return of Large-Scale Reform. Journal of Educational Change, 1, 5-28.

Goodman, K.S. (1967). Reading: A Psycholinguistic Guessing Game. Journal of the Reading Specialist, 4, 126-35.

Hillocks, G. (1986). Research on Written Composition. Urbana, Il.: National Conference on Research in English/ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills.

Hillocks, G. (1995). Teaching Writing as Reflective Practice. New York: Teachers College Press.

HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) (1992). The Teaching and Learning of Reading in Primary Schools 1991: a report by HMI. Stanmore: author.

Holdaway, D. (1979). The Foundations of Literacy. Sydney: Ashton Scholastic.

Holdaway, D. (1982). Shared Book Experience: Teaching Reading Using Favourite Books. Theory into Practice, 21(4), 293-300.

Ireson, J., Blatchford, P. & Joscelyne, T. (1995). What Do Teachers Do? Classroom Activities in the Initial Teaching of Reading. Educational Psychology, 15(3), 245-256.

Lewis, M. & Wray, D. (1995). Developing Children's Non-Fiction Writing: working with writing frames. Leamington Spa: Scholastic.

LTF (Literacy Task Force) (1997a). A Reading Revolution: How We Can Teach Every Child to Read Well. London: The Literacy Task Force do University of London: Institute of Education.

LTF (Literacy Task Force) (1997b). The Implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. London: Department for Education and Employment.

Martin, J.R. (1989). Factual Writing: exploring and challenging social reality Second Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) (1996a). The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools: Standards and Quality in Education 1994/95. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) (1996b). Subjects and Standards: Issues for school development arising from OFSTED inspection findings 1994-5: Key Stages 1 & 2. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) (1996c). The Teaching of Reading in 45 Inner London Primary Schools: A report by Her Majesty's Inspectors in collaboration with the LEAs of Islington, Southwark and Tower Hamlets. London: author.

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education (1997). The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools: Standards and Quality in Education 1995/6. London: The Stationery Office.

OFSTED (Office for Standards in Education) (2000). The Teaching of Writing in Primary Schools: Could do better - A Discussion Paper. London: author.

Perfetti, C. (1995). Cognitive research can inform reading education. Journal of Research in Reading 18(2), 106-115. Reprinted in J. Oakhill & R. Beard (Eds.) (1999). Reading Development and the Teaching of Reading: a psychological perspective. Oxford: Blackwell.

Reid, J. (1993). Reading and spoken language: the nature of the links. In R. Beard (Ed.). Teaching Literacy: Balancing Perspectives. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Reynolds, D. (1992). School Effectiveness and School Improvement: An Updated Review of the British Literature. In D. Reynolds & P. Cuttance (Eds.) School Effectiveness: Research. Policy and Practice. London: Cassell.

Rumelhart, DE. & McClelland, J.L. (Eds.) (1986). Parallel Distributed Processing. Vol. 1: Foundations. Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press.

Scheerens, J. (1992). Effective Schooling: Research. Theory and Practice. London: Cassell.

Seidenberg, MS.& McClelland, J.L. (1989). A distributed, developmental model of word recognition and naming. Psychological Review 96, 523-568.

Smith, F. (1971). Understanding Reading. New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stanovich, K E (2000). Progress in Understanding Reading. New York: Guilford.

Stanovich, K E and P J (1995). How research might inform the debate about early reading acquisition. Journal of Research in Reading. 18(2), 87-105. Reprinted in J. Oakhill & R. Beard (Eds.) (1999). Reading Development and the Teaching of Reading: a psychological perspective. Oxford: Blackwell.

Wragg, E.C., Wragg, C.M., Haynes, G.S. & Chamberlain, R.P. (1998). Improving Literacy in the Primary School. London: Routledge.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE